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Sent time: 09/11/2007 01:37:46 PM
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Subject: The Lower Snake River and Water Temperature
Attachments: pic32570.gif pic03764.gif

Mike:

In our cell phone conversation, I did not get a chance to share the following information with you. You probably know a lot of this, but perhaps it might be helpful to you.

Rick and I worked together on the NEPA review of the Lower Snake River dams under Section 309. Rick was the manager of the NEPA Unit and I was the lead staff person on that review. We can share those documents with you, but I believe (Rick correct me if I am wrong) that our Preliminary Draft TMDL documents provide more up to date information and analysis on temperature and the Lower Snake River .

Temperature is really a big issue in the Lower Snake River. RBM-10 found the Snake River to be the largest heat contributor to the Columbia River. And as you know Snake River Fall Chinook spawn in the mainstem. NOAA Fisheries scientists assert that following the impact of the dams on Snake River Fall Chinook juvenile fish mortality (which the action agencies now say has been drastically minimized), temperature is the remaining limiting factor.

As you know, the Lower Snake River gets really hot in the late summer and early fall. There is a scientific study by the USFWS (I get a copy if anyone is interested) that shows that there is delayed migration as a result of the high temperatures. So when you add up the delayed migration, increased metabolism from the higher temperatures, and the impact of the dams, temperature carries a big impact on these fish. I organized two workshops in Portland in 1997 and 1999 where we brought over 100 scientists and policy makers together on both occasions to share information on the impact of water temperature. (I have these proceedings if anyone is interested).

It is a fact that EPA has made temperature a big issue in the Lower Snake River through the temperature workshops, the NEPA review, the 2000 Biological Opinion and finally the Preliminary Draft TMDL. Before EPA got engaged in the Columbia River in 1997, temperature was not on the table. The Action Agencies and NOAA Fisheries had focused on fish passage and dam mortality. They have said all along that there is nothing further that can be done for water temperature and they are doing all they can do. However EPA has always asserted that we do not yet want to close that door and we would like to talk about what else can be done and the scientific benefits (e.g. Hells Canyon, Grand Coulee, and others).

I do not believe that Hells Canyon temperature improvements will affect the Lower Snake River from my conversations with Ben and knowledge of the River, but I do believe that any improvements to the Snake River from Hells Canyon would be a gigantic contribution to address the Snake River water temperature problem because of the benefits to migrating fish as I mentioned above. Ben and I have had this conversation before and he can confirm or deny the accuracy based on his analysis of the Snake River.

One other big issue for the Lower Snake River is barging. NOAA and the Corps have always said that barging the Lower Snake River fish minimizes the impact of water temperature by helping the fish down the river and getting them through the dams. Lower Snake Fall Chinook barging (controversial with the Tribes) is not an EPA issue but that has been used a water temperature mitigation technique.

I look forward to further conversations with you on this interesting and engaging issue.

ML

▼ Mike Gearheard/R10/USEPA/US

Mike Gearheard/R10/USEPA/US

09/07/2007 04:15 PM

To

Elin Miller/R10/USEPA/US@EPA

cc

soscia.marylou@epa.gov, Ben Cope/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Richard Parkin/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, psyk.christine@epa.gov, palmer.john@epa.gov

Subject

Re: Fw: Seattle Times Op-ed: Our lawmakers can hatch a vibrant future for salmon 

Two sort of fuzzy thoughts. First, breaching the Lower Snake dams is not really an EPA issue. We would have (and have had) some involvement in the issue, especially as we carry out our CAA 309 responsibility to review other agency actions. When this idea last had

momentum, it was in the form of the Corps preparing an analysis of the breaching option, and we conducted some review of their work. Parkin was involved, as I recall. But fundamentally, EPA would be largely on the sidelines.

Second, and related to the leverage idea, there is a potential water quality connection between the Idaho Power Company FERC relicensing activity that you were briefed about and the four Lower Snake dams. The connection, which I think our modelers would say is pretty tenuous, concerns temperature. The four Corps dams on the Lower Snake collectively cause some significant increase in temperature in the Snake River. IPC's big Brownlee reservoir up the river in Hells Canyon might put enough colder water down the Snake to somewhat mitigate the temperature effect of the Corps dams. However, this is a point we should not make until smart people like Rick Parkin and Ben Cope confirm it. But if that connection made technical sense, then the argument would be that a temperature control structure at Brownlee could reduce the negative impact of the four Lower Snake Corps dams. (Two problems with that pie-in-the-sky idea: First, Ben will probably say that the cooling effect of Brownlee water would be pretty minor all the way down at the Lower Snake dams. Second, temperature isn't really the biggest issue relative to salmon and the Lower Snake River dams. It is an issue, but the larger problem with the dams is more related to the fact that they cause downstream migrating smolts to pass through the turbines and they turn a natural flowing river into a series of warm lakes filled with predators.)

Mike Gearheard
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▼ Elin Miller/R10/USEPA/US

Elin Miller/R10/USEPA/US

09/06/2007 08:07 PM

To

Mike Gearheard/R10/USEPA/US@EPA

cc

Subject

Re: Fw: Seattle Times Op-ed: Our lawmakers can hatch a vibrant future for salmon 

Very interesting. Do you really think we can ever see dams removed on the Snake? Or do we use this for leverage for the priorities we talked about last week ie, a few select things through the FERC?

Best Regards,

Elin

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▼ Mike Gearheard/R10/USEPA/US

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09/06/2007 10:07 AM

To

Miller.Elin@epamail.epa.gov

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Subject

Fw: Seattle Times Op-ed: Our lawmakers can hatch a vibrant future for salmon

fyi. The latest on this long-running Northwest environmental issue.

Mike Gearheard
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----- Forwarded by Mike Gearheard/R10/USEPA/US on 09/06/2007 10:06 AM -----

MaryLou Soscia/R10/USEPA/US
Sent by: Marylou Soscia

09/05/2007 02:14 PM

To

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cc
Subject

Fw: Seattle Times Op-ed: Our lawmakers can hatch a vibrant future for salmon

Interesting news from Save our Wild Salmon:

Mr. Barbieri, the chairman of the board of Red Lion Hotels Corporation based in Spokane WA, highlights new leaders in the region who are questioning the status quo and embracing a new vision of the future, our communities and economies. He focuses on the fate of the lower Snake River dams and its endangered wild salmon and steelhead, and the window of opportunity in front of us right now to remove dams, recover salmon, and invest in our communities and economies in ways that work for people, salmon, and our environment.

Under court order, the Bush Administration is about to issue a "new" Federal Salmon Plan for the Columbia and Snake Rivers to replace the one that was ruled illegal in 2005. Unfortunately, early signs about the plan look grim. However, the public (you!) will have a chance to demonstrate to Congress and others strong public support for salmon recovery in the next several months. Stay tuned for more on that soon. We need your help!

thank you!
jb
Joseph Bogaard
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OUR LAWMAKERS CAN HELP HATCH A VIBRANT FUTURE FOR SALMON
Guest columnist Donald K. Barbieri
Special to The Times
Tuesday, September 4, 2007

As the deadline nears for the federal government to deliver a new plan to restore wild Columbia and Snake River salmon and steelhead, there is a growing awareness in Eastern Washington that it's not just the fate of an iconic species hanging in the balance.

The decision point is coming over whether to remove four dams on the lower Snake River and truly restore wild salmon, or let this species fall by the wayside.

In the Inland Northwest, more business owners, community leaders, and even farmers are asking whether a restored river and fishery offers a more prosperous path to the region long term than holding onto four outdated dams.

As a fourth-generation resident and business owner in Spokane, I, as well as my family, have firsthand knowledge of the increasing value of healthy rivers, recreation and outdoor opportunities to both urban and rural economies.

In its early years, Spokane - like other cities - relied on its rivers for power and dumping waste, to the detriment of clean water and fisheries.

My great-grandfather told stories of fishing with local Native Americans for the famous "June Hogs," 100-pound salmon that once leaped the falls of downtown Spokane before dams wiped them out. And, while Spokane is now working to restore its backyard river, residents must travel south two hours to the Snake River and its tributaries to fish on the limited runs of salmon and steelhead - mostly hatchery fish, not wild - that manage to make it past eight dams on the lower Columbia and Snake rivers.

Like other places, the Inland Northwest is in an economic transition, one reflected in the debate over the Snake River.

The four lower Snake dams were built between 1960-75, primarily to allow sea-going barge traffic to reach Idaho. They no longer serve the best interests of local economies and exact a steep price by devastating salmon runs. In addition, Lower Granite dam is creating a flood risk to Clarkston, Asotin County, and Lewiston, Idaho, due to the massive amounts of sediment piling up behind it.

Options to address this growing problem carry significant long-term price tags: raising levees and potentially roads and bridges. Still, some local officials and industries have yet to come to grips with the fact that the dams are becoming costlier to keep than to remove.

But a new generation of community and business leaders is rightly questioning the value of maintaining the status quo versus embracing a new vision for their towns. Replacing 140 miles of barge navigation with new rail and improved highways, supporting clean-energy investments and restoring a salmon sport fishery with an estimated worth of more than a half-billion dollars a year to Idaho alone would be an economic boon, allowing both farming sectors and new industries to thrive.

Change can be difficult, especially when federal agencies and politicians are slow to chart the future path. I ran for Congress in Eastern Washington's conservative 5th District in 2004. I heeded advice to avoid the hot-button issue of salmon recovery and dam removal at all costs. If I were running today, I would take a different approach, both because the residents of Eastern Washington increasingly recognize that quality of life is the economic future of our towns and cities, and because there is a moral imperative to protect a species both iconic to the Northwest and spiritually vital to the Native American tribes.

Meanwhile, a federal judge appears determined to make the federal agencies honor the Endangered Species Act. West Coast commercial fishermen are demanding recovery actions upstream. And in the Inland Northwest, a growing number of quiet discussions are occurring on what abundant salmon and a restored river could mean for the region.

It is time for Congress to act, starting with authorizing much-needed studies through the Salmon Economic Analysis and Planning Act (SEAPA), HR 1507, introduced by Reps. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., and Jim McDermott, D-Seattle. It's time for the entire Northwest congressional delegation to finally step forward, stop hiding from the debate and take a leadership role in ensuring salmon and the Inland Northwest have a vibrant future.

Donald K. Barbieri is chairman of the board of Red Lion Hotels Corporation, based in Spokane.

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